

REPORT 3:
BLACK EXTENDED AND CHOSEN FAMILY

TIME OF
RECKONING

TOR

A community-led series of engagement and healing justice sessions focused on the criminal justice system and its collateral consequences on Black people in Minnesota.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

Time of Reckoning, Healing, Listening, and Action is a series of community engagement and healing justice sessions that culminate in a Black-led town hall and policy action roundtable focusing on the criminal justice system and its collateral consequences on Black people in Minnesota.

The series strategically includes policymakers with power and influence to implement the recommendations brought forth by the community through this process.

Convened by the community and co-chaired by Dr. Brittany Lewis of Research in Action (RIA) and Dr. Joi Lewis of Joi Unlimited, this work was spurred by the murder of Mr. George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). This process is an opportunity for true “radical re-imagining” of what is possible within our collective efforts to advance racial justice.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

Time of Reckoning consists of five critical community healing and policy action engagements that aim to illustrate to the nation what community-centered policy change can look like. Each session is structured like a congressional hearing with prepared narratives of lived experiences from Black community members (Testifiers), research and context from Black community leaders providing policy and practice solutions (Contextualizers), questions from policymakers, and a live work session with the goal of developing tangible actions and bold visions for community wellbeing.

Time of Reckoning forums amplify the lived experiences of different members of the Black family—**the women, men, trans people, children, elders, and caregivers.**

The first forum, held in December 2020, focused on the experiences of Black women and girls. The second forum, held in February 2021, focused on the experiences of Black men and boys.

We use healing justice as a framework for this project, a process through which we make ourselves sound and whole again. In this work, we are healing from trauma through radical self-care. Healing justice is an evolving political framework shaped by economic and racial justice that recenters the role of healing inside of liberation that seeks to transform, intervene, and respond to generational trauma and violence in our movements, communities, and lives and to regenerate our traditions of liberatory and resiliency practices that have been lost.*

**Page and Raffo, US Social Forum Detroit*

FEBRUARY 2021 FORUM

The third forum focused on the experiences of extended and chosen family. These are people who are sometimes, but not always, outside of your family of origin. Communal Elders, Play Cousins, Returning Citizens, Other Mothers, Foster and Adoptive families, and Sister/Brother insiders are types of extended and chosen family that were explored during April's forum.

The forum for extended and chosen family had 70 Black attendees in the Zoom viewing format with more across the livestream via Facebook and on demand via YouTube.

Three Testifiers shared their stories and **three Contextualizers** provided data and analysis to put these stories into context. These remarks informed small group discussions.

Testifiers included:

Quincy Powe: *a 26-year-young bisexual Black man born and raised in Minneapolis*

Roxanne Anderson: *an abolitionist, director of the Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition, co-founding CEO of Rare Productions, REP core team member, and transracial adoptee profoundly impacted by the criminal justice system*

Abu-Bakr As-Sidiq: *a 50-year-old Black male who grew up in Kankakee, Illinois*

Contextualizers Included:

Anika Bowie: *Founder of Run Like Harriet, Vice President of NAACP Minneapolis, organizer, and social justice renegade*

Rev. Rhonda Bell-Herron: *a community mother, minister, wife of a pastor, mother, aunt, advocate for those in need, and county financial specialist*

Autumn Mason: *a community cousin, niece, and auntie*



“It takes a village to raise a child. This proverb exemplifies the need for a collective, culturally based support system in one’s upbringing.”

ANIKA BOWIE
(CONTEXTUALIZER)

TESTIMONY HIGHLIGHTS

Testifiers shared experiences from growing up and how the chosen and extended family—from one person's God-given mother to another's beauty shop friends—supported them. Their stories showed how even with strong support from family, systemic oppression and racism were still embedded in their life experiences from an early age.

“Sometimes it would feel like there was nothing I could do without someone wanting to direct me to what they feel is right or that I should do. It felt like I was constantly being talked at.”

– Quincy Powe

on trying to access services after his guardians kicked him out of his home after he came out as bisexual to them

“As I grew, I watched and tried to fit in. I did code-switching and other things; I took on stereotypes of Black folks because I didn't have any real Black folks in my life, except at the beauty shop. And, child, I didn't know the lingo, but I loved it.”

– Roxanne Anderson

on growing up and navigating their identity as a transracial adoptee

“Today I can say that for the first time in a long time, that I'm starting to put my life together with the continuing help and support of my family, the groups that I attend, and a lot of counseling.”

– Abu-Bakr As-Sidiq

“But even at places that had resources, I would have to make sure that I am there at the times that they were doing these things. Sometimes I'd miss out because I didn't have the money to get to the transportation to make it. Sometimes when I did make it, there would still be rules and regulations set up that made it hard to get the services or resources immediately.”

QUINCY POWE

(TESTIFIER)

CALLS FOR CHANGE

The solutions raised by Testifiers, Contextualizers, and event attendees called for five kinds of action:

GIVE COMMUNITY CONTROL

This includes having more individuals from the community in positions of political power as well as ensuring community control of interventions and resources intended to benefit the community.

INVEST

Solutions call for rethinking how to invest in individuals and community resources to support wealth development and access to meaningful resources. Underlying this investment is a reframing for asset-based, positive expectations about potential, not blame and criminalization.

DIVEST

Solutions call for moving resources away from policies that undermine healing and justice in the Black community.

ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

Ensure accountability for systems about the outcomes for individuals and the community; accountability should be at individual, organization and system levels.

GROUND IN HEALING JUSTICE

Solutions that recenter the role of healing inside of change to transform, intervene and respond to generational trauma and violence in movements, communities, and lives (Page and Raffo, US Social Forum Detroit)

CALLS FOR CHANGE: NOW

Contextualizers discussed the disproportionality in who is helped and hurt by public services. They suggested changes to make now, including expanding eligibility for resources and services to truly meet all people's needs.

This includes providing mental health support for people affected by incarceration; expanding human services eligibility to cover families' lost income due to incarceration; ceasing collection of child support while incarcerated; and eliminating the county requirement that uses a portion of emergency assistance funds to pay for shelter costs.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: NOW

Small group discussion participants provided additional recommendations for change now:

Demand accountability in actions from those with power, as community often hears statements and sees emotions from those with power but do not see action for change to keep people safe from immediate harm.


- Public officials should respond with when and how action will happen.
- Be clear about who is responsible for what.
- Establish an independent agency to investigate police misuse of force.
- Launch federal investigations into police departments that use practices like arrest quotas.
- Change the Minnesota Department of Human Rights statutory charter to be proactive rather than reactive to claims made.
- Commit to supporting the Page Amendment to bring quality education by allowing for systems to follow the lead of parents in a community.

Use asset-framing when engaging with communities so communities can build on their strengths.

- Engage communities, with deep listening and real response, in community planning, such as for the North Minneapolis light-rail route.
- Communities can shape public spaces that feel welcoming, healthy, and reflective of their culture and history.

Remove cops from schools.

End traffic stops for minor equipment violations.

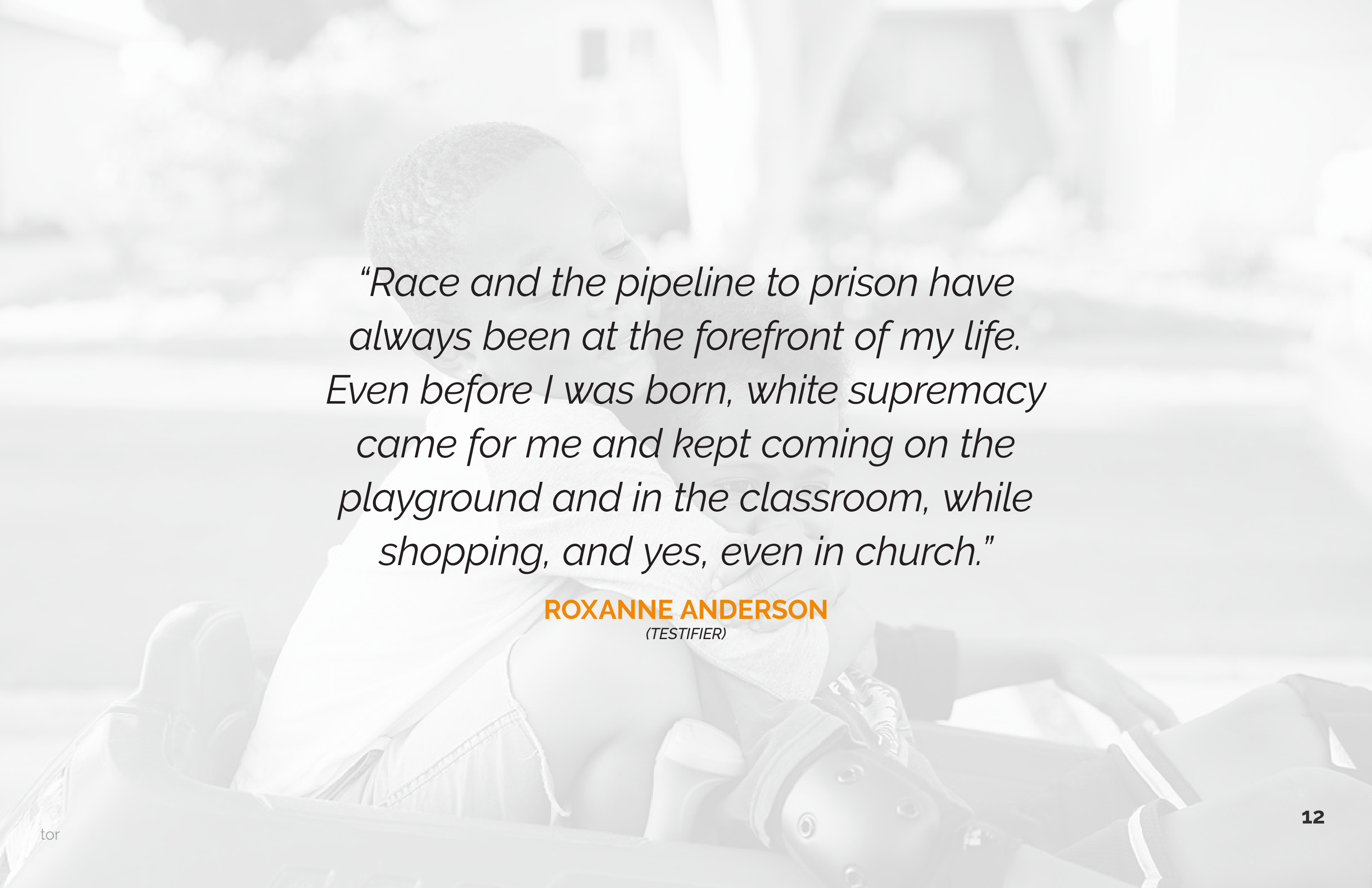


“For each of you, as leaders, Black people need you to [be] brave and radical in the ways that you imagine the system changing in a manner that ensures our public safety. Brave, meaning speak up and out. Brave meaning risk the safety of your position and social capital in proximity to whiteness and power. Radical in the ideas that you propose because you know they aren’t welcome.

We don’t have time—WE, Black People—don’t have any more time for trepidation. History has granted you all the most power in these arenas and we now need you to act.”

TISH JONES

(POET, FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TRUARTSPEAKS)



“Race and the pipeline to prison have always been at the forefront of my life. Even before I was born, white supremacy came for me and kept coming on the playground and in the classroom, while shopping, and yes, even in church.”

ROXANNE ANDERSON
(TESTIFIER)

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *LONG TERM*

Contextualizers discussed the collateral consequences of involvement in the criminal justice system and changes needed to better support returning citizens.

These consequences include the loss of voting rights, jury duty, and access to professional licensure. The State should ban restrictions of individuals' voting rights and grant voting rights to those who have returned from their sentence. The collateral impact goes beyond the incarcerated individual, affecting their children as well. Having an incarcerated parent is one of the most common Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) among Black people. ACEs lead to a higher likelihood of depression, substance abuse, suicide attempts, and other health risks.

In calling for more community-centered, resource-based support for incarcerated people, Contextualizers recommended investments to support families with incarcerated loved ones, including organizations that support families to afford phone calls and transportation to stay connected. Research shows visits by loved ones can reduce recidivism because people then have a stronger support network when they reenter society. Other organizations to invest in focus on services like drug treatment. Contextualizers also recommended policy changes to support returning citizens' reentry, such as family-inclusive renters' rights.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *LONG TERM*

Small group discussion participants called for the following long-term solutions:

Invest in healing resources.

- Invest in gatherings where people can connect with one another and their community.
- Invest in mental health and community healers.
- Ensure resources are trauma-informed.
- Invest in a public health approach to the addiction crisis.

Return resources to communities.

- Provide reparations.
- Address household basic needs so that children can be children and not worry about housing or other resources when needed.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: LONG TERM

Provide youth with mentorship and resources so they feel supported and loved.

- Fund youth programming—like arts and crafts, sports, and other programming that youth want—so they are in environments where they can thrive.
- Ensure strong affirmations so children see themselves positively, “beautiful just the way they are.”
- Hold children in love, providing support and counseling to families so they can nurture youth of all gender identities and sexual orientations. Reject internalized oppression that leads to perpetuating harm.
- Bring Black mentors into schools until there are more Black educators in the school system.
- Provide community safe houses for homeless youth.

Shift accountability and “rewards” for police.

- Officers should be liable for their actions, through their own insurance.
- Stop paying salaries or pensions after police officer infractions.
- Require officers to be part of the community and live where they serve.


Support formerly incarcerated individuals to transition back to society.

- Restore felon voting rights.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *LONG TERM*


End law enforcement practices that disproportionately harm Black people.

- Use the law to protect vulnerable communities.
- Legalize recreational cannabis nationwide, expunge records, and seek amnesty for those incarcerated for cannabis-related offenses.
- End mandatory minimum sentencing laws for low-level offenses.
- Ban all racial profiling by federal, state, and local agencies.
- Change responses to protests to reroute money for policing back into community and to focus on de-escalation.
- Criminalize violence against protesters.



“As I look back, they took very good care of us with what they knew how to do.”

ABU-BAKR AS-SIDIQ
(TESTIFIER)



“My community operated and thrived because it was one big extended family. We shared values, traditions, beliefs, struggles, accomplishments, and love with one another in a way that many Black communities in the U.S. have.”

AUTUMN MASON
(CONTEXTUALIZER)

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *RADICAL REIMAGINING*

Contextualizers discussed the ways public systems have been created to discriminate against people with criminal backgrounds and have disrupted the Black family's ability to thrive.

They discussed how these government interventions deepen rather than heal root causes of pain. They recommended dismantling the current criminal justice system, which is punitive, oppressive, and racially based. The State must revise laws, policies, and social practices that are grounded in racism, such as police brutality, so that the full strength of the law defends Black Americans, rather than exploiting them.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *RADICAL REIMAGINING*

The State must also empower the community with equitable opportunity for ownership, economic independence, and trauma healing.

In this way the Black community can regain its power to support ourselves. Contextualizers recommended applying a village mentality rather than the current white, middle class, heterosexual, Christian-led, individualized lens and models that exist today, such for welcoming returning village members. Similarly, they called for a village approach to houselessness, with shelters and counties establishing community service teams to work with families. These teams can include social services, community corrections, public health, employment/economic assistance, veterans' affairs, partnerships with housing/landlords, community organizations, and faith-based institutions. The State should also fund village-style shelters with wraparound service centers at their core. These suggestions exemplify treating houselessness as a public health issue, rather than a public safety issue, which only worsens the problem. This treats the underlying causes—which can include poverty, family conflict or death, lack of affordable or appropriate housing, domestic violence, crises like natural disaster, and systemic racism.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *RADICAL REIMAGINING*

Small group discussion participants shared additional ways to radically reimagine current systems:


Dismantle and rebuild systems that are built to harm and not help Black youth and families, especially corrections, education, and foster care. These systems are hurting the Black community.

- End systems that break up families—like foster care and child protective services—which are adding trauma to families and bringing children into households that may not be culturally responsive to them.
- Focus new systems on rehabilitation, nurturing, and support as well as prevention rather than punishment.
- Develop community models of public safety instead of the current policing system.
- End the school-to-prison pipeline.

CALLS FOR CHANGE: *RADICAL REIMAGINING*


Change the culture of policing.

- Create an intervention system that allows for de-escalation.
- Provide training on alternatives to shooting.
- Undo the infiltration of white racism in law enforcement; require affiliation with white supremacy groups to be grounds for dismissal.
- Center culture on respect for life and seeking peace in communities, such as by redefining “police officers” as “peace officers.”
- Disband and deconstruct failed police departments.
- Demilitarize police departments.



“Public safety is enhanced when the traditionally locked-out groups such as low-income families or individuals, houseless youth, and the formerly incarcerated are incorporated into the social and economic life of the community.”

REV. RHONDA BELL-HERRON
(CONTEXTUALIZER)

A group of people, mostly Black women, are participating in a protest. They are holding up signs and raising their fists in the air. The signs have various messages, including "Black Lives Matter", "No Justice No Peace", "We will be heard", "No Justice No Peace", "Black Lives Matter", "No More Hashtags!", and "BLACK LIVES MATTER". The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

"I want my children's life and my children's children's future to be better than it was for me and the generations before me."

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT

OUR TEAM

(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

CO-CHAIRS

Dr. Joi Lewis
Dr. Brittany Lewis

CORE TEAM

Lulete Mola
Marcus Owens
Hassan As-Sidiq
Pastor Brian Herron
Leslie E. Redmond
T. Mychael Rambo
Tish Jones
Tomme Beevas

COMMUNICATIONS & PRODUCTION TEAM

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Producer
Alex West Steinman
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OUR PARTNERS

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